

Paul's Thank-You Note

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Phil. 4:10-23

In the last chapter of Philippians, Paul mentions the occasion which prompted the writing of this epistle.

In these verses we find an expression of Paul's gratitude, a "Thank-You Note", if you will.

Phil. 4:10-23, *"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."*

In these concluding verses, there are a number of notable things I would like to emphasize:

- The Philippians' generosity.
- Paul's contentment.
- Christ's power.
- God's riches.
- The saint's greeting's

The first being...

The Philippians' generosity

As described by Paul.

Notice especially verses 10, 14-18:

- Phil. 4:10, *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.”*
- Phil. 4:14-18, *“Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”*

Clearly, they demonstrated an “on-going” support and concern for the apostle.

When Paul first departed from Macedonia, they shared with him.

Even before leaving Macedonia, while he was still in Thessalonica, they sent aid on several occasions.

Now at last, while in prison (house arrest) in Rome, they sent a gift by the hands of Epaphroditus.

What a wonderful picture of fellowship between a congregation and an evangelist!

There are a very few today that do not support Bro. Otto Alvarez saying they think he is a fraud, that he is just pocketing the money congregations send him. They have no evidence, just suspicion. How unlike they are as compared to the church at Philippi and their attitude toward Brother Paul in his evangelistic work.

Another notable thing in this passage is...

Paul's contentment

As expressed by Paul.

His expression of thanks was not to hint that he was in great need. Phil. 4:11, *"Not that I speak in respect of want..."*

For Paul was quite content with the "state" or condition he found himself in. Phil. 4:11, *"...for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."*

This "contentment" was something he had learned. Phil. 4:11-12, *"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."*

What was the "key" to Paul's contentment?

As expressed in Phil. 4:13, it involved strength given to him by the Lord. Phil. 4:13, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."*

- Christ enabled him to be content whether full or hungry.
- Christ enabled him to be content whether abounding or in need.

Part of this strength from the Lord may have been the proper perspective which Paul likely received from the Lord.

The proper perspective about life and death. Phil. 1:21-24, *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."*

The proper perspective about the true necessities in life.

1 Tim. 6:6-8, *"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."*

Having mentioned the strength given by the Lord, let's look a little closer at...

Christ's power

There is indeed wonderful power available for the Christian!

As Paul indicates, this power enables one to do all things necessary in serving the Lord. Phil. 4:13, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”*

We learn more about this wonderful power in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians.

It is power about which Paul wanted them to know.

Eph. 1:18-19, *“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,”*

It is power like that used to raise Jesus from the dead, and seated Him at the right hand of God!

Eph. 1:19-21, *“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.”*

Paul attributes such power to the Holy Spirit, dwelling in the Christian.

Rom. 8:11-14, *“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”*

He prayed that God would strengthen the Ephesians with such power, which would enable them to accomplish great things.

- Eph. 3:16, *“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,”*
- Eph. 3:20-21, *“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the*

power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

In other words, with the Spirit as the instrumental agent, God and Christ enable the Christian to do all that he or she is required to do!

The ramification of this power.

We are not alone in our efforts to “work out our own salvation”.

Phil. 2:12-13, *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”*

There is no excuse for not doing what God desires!

When we fall, it is usually a problem of the will, not the ability! (unlike those outside of Christ, where it is a problem of ability).

Rom. 7:22-25, *“For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”*

For Christians who sin knowingly, it is not that they can’t do the will of God, but they won’t!

But because we may sometimes sin ignorantly we are always in need of the cleansing blood of Jesus.

When we know the will of God, there are no excuses for not doing it!

What a wonderful blessing for those who are in Christ, to have that power! But there is even a hint of more blessings in our text, as we notice what is said about...

God’s riches

As defined by Paul.

These are “riches in glory” which God supplies by Jesus Christ.

Phil. 4:19, *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*

One must be “in Christ” to enjoy these “riches”.

Indeed, “in Christ” is the realm in which God provides every spiritual blessing.

Eph. 1:3-13, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places **in Christ**: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things **in Christ**, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even **in him**: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted **in Christ**. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*”

Note the use of the phrase “in Christ”, or “in Him”.

But God provides not only spiritual needs, but “all your needs”; which includes the necessities of life, like food and clothing.

As Jesus Himself taught.

Matt. 6:30-33, “*Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have **need** of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

With “riches” like these, how can we not be content?

We have an abundance of “spiritual” blessings, and an assurance of “physical” needs, how could we ever be less than satisfied?

May God forgive us when we take these “riches” lightly and begin to feel discontented with what we have!

Finally, we note...

The saint's greeting's

As read here in Philippians...

Paul first sends his greetings. Phil. 4:21, "*Salute every saint in Christ Jesus...*"

The brethren with him (those who visited him while he was in house arrest) send their greetings. Phil. 4:21, "... *The brethren which are with me greet you.*"

Then "all the saints" send their greetings (the rest of the Christians in Rome). Phil. 4:22, "*All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.*"

The simple act of greeting can serve an important function.

Clearly, Paul thought so.

- Rom. 16:3-16, "*Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Salute my wellbeloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia unto Christ. Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Greet Amplias my beloved in the Lord. Salute Urbane, our helper in Christ, and Stachys my beloved. Salute Apelles approved in Christ. Salute them which are of Aristobulus' household. Salute Herodion my kinsman. Greet them that be of the household of Narcissus, which are in the Lord. Salute Tryphena and Tryphosa, who labour in the Lord. Salute the beloved Persis, which laboured much in the Lord. Salute Rufus chosen in the Lord, and his mother and mine. Salute Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermas, Patrobas, Hermes, and the brethren which are with them. Salute Philologus, and Julia, Nereus, and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints which are with them. Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.*"
- Rom. 16:21-23, "*Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you. I Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord. Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you. Erastus the chamberlain of the city saluteth you, and Quartus a brother.*"

Some possible benefits of greeting one another:

- Greeting one another expresses our love and appreciation for each another.
- Greeting one another frequently (in letter or in person) nourishes the relationship we have as brethren in Christ.

Note that Paul desired to greet “every” saint in Christ Jesus; no room for favoritism here! Phil. 4:21, “*Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.*”

How we greet (or fail to greet) other Christians in our assemblies reveals a lot about ourselves.

When we greet them it can show that we are caring and loving without partiality.

Conclusion

Such are some the things we can glean from a simple “thank-you note”.

- The Philippians’ generosity.
- Paul’s contentment.
- Christ’s power.
- God’s riches.
- The saints’ greetings.

What this reveals is the high quality of life experienced by those in Christ!

Who despite the sort of circumstances faced by Paul could still feel and write such a letter as the epistle to the Philippians!

As we close this study on this wonderful epistle, I leave with you two words: “glory” and “grace”.

- Phil. 4:20, “*Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*”
- Phil. 4:23, “*The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*”

Have you received the wonderful grace of our Lord in your life, by obeying His gospel? Are you living so as to offer glory to God, both in word and deed?

May such portions of God’s Word like the Epistle to the Philippians inspire you to do both!

